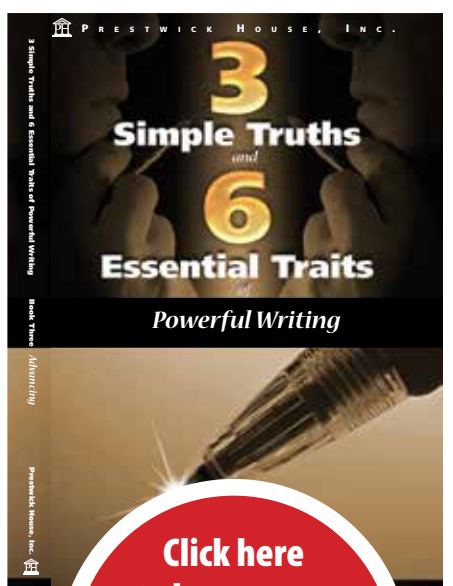




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3

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6

Essential Traits
of

Powerful Writing



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Powerful writing really says something.

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Applying the Second Truth

Powerful writing is understandable to others.

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Applying the Third Truth

Powerful writing is painless to read.

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TRAIT THREE:

SENTENCE STRUCTURE AND VARIETY

POWERFUL WRITING involves more than writing correct sentences and varying their length and structure. Now that you've mastered the essentials of *crafting* good sentences, it is time to begin to look at the *art* of writing powerful sentences. The art of language use is called rhetoric, originally the art of persuasion through language. There are a few basic techniques or devices—some you actually already employ without knowing it—that, when mastered, will give your writing those qualities that will push it to the top of any scoring rubric.

Make Yours Better!

Note that this essay would be even better with variety in sentence structure.

What is this mysterious creature? The horseshoe crab: *limulus polyphemus*. A creature four hundred million years old. It is an interesting animal in its own right because it is so old but what does this animal have to do with human beings? In fact, its blood has importance for human beings in medicine.

The year was 1956 when Doctor Frederick Bang of the Marine Biological Laboratories in Woods Hole Massachusetts made this important discovery that the crab does not have antibodies proteins to “lock up” a virus or bacteria like humans so, how does it protect itself? A bacteria endotoxins—proteins on its cell walls could harm the horseshoe crab. Remember that the ocean has billions of bacteria! But Bang found, horseshoe crabs actually have a system, when bacteria invade the horseshoe crab through a wound the crab's blood cells trap the bacteria to keep it still. Then can be attacked by defense molecules. Amazingly the clot of blood cells and bacteria even block a wound and prevent more bacteria from entering.

But why does it matter to human beings? Because: vaccines and other medical solutions introduced into the human body must be sterile. To sterilize them, medical professionals use high degrees of heat. But the endotoxins remain even after a bacteria has been killed by heat. So they could still be in the medical Solution: cause fever and even death. So scientists need a way

■ Although the author is trying to capture the reader's attention by starting with a question and using brief, dramatic sentences, he or she does not have full control of sentence structure.

■ The author does a good job getting voice into the passage, asking questions, and varying sentence length to keep us

Essay Critique

This is a passage on a scientific topic; the author wants to explain why horseshoe crabs are important to medicine. One error we might expect is an overly dry, dull explanation of the facts, without a lot of interesting phrases or details. This author, though, clearly has a lot of good information and enthusiasm for the topic, which keeps us interested in the subject matter. The author can work on keeping his or her own voice in this passage while fixing the errors in sentence structure; he or she may also consider “toning down” the passage a bit, depending on what kind of audience the paper is for.

This essay receives a
score of **7** on the:

Sentence Structure Rubric

11 = **Variety in sentence** structure and length is used to strengthen the impact of the essay.

10 = PROFICIENT

Sentence formation is adequate to meet the needs of the subject, audience, and purpose.

9 = **Awareness of audience**, purpose, tone, and the demands of the topic govern most of the sentence structure choices. Minor lapses in tone and style—on the sentence level—weaken the overall effect.

8 = **There is evidence** of an awareness of audience, purpose, tone, and the demands of the topic in sentence structure choices. Minor lapses in tone and style—on the sentence level—weaken the overall effect.

7 = ADVANCING

The writer has made intentional sentence formation choices for the sake of clarity and impact, but the resulting tone and voice are not fully appropriate to the audience, purpose, and topic. Minor problems in structure, grammar, and/or word choice make the essay less effective than it might be.

Exercise 1: Creating Parallel Structure



Each of the following sentences has one or more problems with parallelism. Identify the problem, revise the sentence, and then explain why you chose to revise the sentence as you did.

1. Language use is often regarded as a measure of a person's intelligence. The way a person speaks and writes is usually an indication of the level of his education, the quantity and quality of his reading, and his ability to listen and learn.

Problem:

Revision:

Explanation:

2. In a series of tragic events, Juliet drinks the sleeping potion, Romeo kills Paris and drinks his poison, Juliet kills herself with Romeo's dagger, and the horrid scene is discovered by the parents and the Duke.

Problem:

Revision:

Explanation:

3. The question before us is not whether we dare to take action, but would it be at all beneficial to do nothing?

Problem:

Revision:

Explanation: